DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 110 849 CE 004 692

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TITLE A Study of the Coordination of the Higher Adult Education Function Within State Systems.
PUB DATE 18 Apr 75
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Adult Education Research Conference (St. Louis, April, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Educational Administration; *Educational Coordination; Educational Planning; Educational Programs; *Higher Education; State Programs; *State Surveys

ABSTRACT

The paper reports the findings of a two-tier data survey involving the chief executive officers of State systems of higher education in determining the extent of their coordination-control of higher adult education. The first general phase of the study indicated that 42 of the 50 systems surveyed had responsibility for higher adult education. In phase two, the 12 State systems having a high degree of involvement in the coordination-control of higher adult education were grouped into three basic models: the voluntary model, the central unit plus regional organizations model, and the central unit at the State level model. Major findings of phase two indicate that a majority of the 12: play a major part in the administration and governance, conduct statewide planning, pay more attention to planning outcomes than to actual planning, allocate functions to institutions according to their strengths and capabilities, have authority over program review, pay slight attention to resource allocation and utilization, take part in evaluation, assign jurisdiction over programing based on the nature and mission of the institution, do not provide financial aid to adult part-time students on a par with full-time on campus students, and rarely employ non-traditional formats. (JR)

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ED110849

A STUDY OF THE COORDINATION OF THE HIGHER ADULT EDUCATION FUNCTION WITHIN STATE SYSTEMS

A PAPER

PRESENTED AT THE ADULT EDUCATION

RESEARCH CONFERENCE AT ST. LOUIS

BY

ROBERT PARKER

APRIL 18, 1975

CE004692

A STUDY OF THE COORDINATION OF THE HIGHER ADULT EDUCATION FUNCTION WITHIN STATE SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION

I appreciate the Program Selection Committee's invitation to deliver a paper at this 1975 Adult Education Research Conference here in St. Louis, the Gateway to the West.

The research on which this paper is based was conducted from August, 1973 to March, 1974. The findings reported here are the result of a two-tier data survey sent to chief executive officers of state systems of higher education in the United States. Realizing how busy these officers and their staffs are, the first data collection questionnaire was kept brief and presented as clearly as possible to facilitate its being completed effortlessly and quickly.

That questionnaire utilized a linear elimination procedure, as recommended by Earl Babbie of the University of Hawaii, such that if one answered a question in the negative, he might eliminate those questions or parts of questions following it. The major purpose of this questionnaire was to determine which systems were actively involved in the specific study on a statewide basis of

the higher adult education function to coordinate and order those efforts as well as those systems already actively involved with this function statewide.

The names of the chief executive officers and the addresses of their agencies were obtained by consulting the Education Directory, 1971-72, Higher Education prepared by the Office of Education and the National Center for Educational Statistics and the 1973 Annual Report on Higher Education prepared by the Education Commission of the States.

Preliminary to sending the first survey questionnaire, letters of inquiry were sent to the National University Extension Association, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the American Council on Education to determine if they were aware of surveys on this topic in process or completed but not published. The responses from these sources, supported by a search of the literature, indicated that no such survey existed or was in progress.

A search of the literature revealed many studies have been conducted concerning the efforts of states to coordinate-control higher education. Although the studies did not specify efforts being made to coordinate-control the higher adult education function within the institutional units in those states, information was provided which set the framework for this study and provided data concerning

types of state systems and the functions and nature of those systems as well as certain theoretical constructions with reference to coordination as it applies to higher education.

Studies made in the area of higher adult education revealed that while there is an "explosion" in the field, concerns are raised concerning the need for policies that will address the problems of marginality, costly duplication and overlapping of programs, scarce resources, the lack of clear definitions, and a general lack of organization. References are made about the trends to centralize and order state efforts in higher adult education in the face of the need to develop comprehensive state programs of lifelong learning, but these references reveal how nonspecific and general is the state of knowledge concerning those state efforts.

Thus this study addressed the problem: What is the current role and scope of statewide systems of coordination-control of higher education in the determination of the policies, financial support, organizational structures, programming, and practices of the higher adult education function within the institutions under the purview of those systems among the fifty states?

Certain terms had to be defined for purposes of this study and I believe it is necessary to include several definitions in this paper. Role and scope refers to the formal-legal assigned responsibility or the assumed responsibility for advising or regulating with reference specifically to the higher adult education function within state

institutions of higher education assigned or accruing to the state system by virtue of its official mandate, and the range of substantive categories coordinated-controlled by that state system. Coordination refers to the act of regulating and combining so as to give harmonious results. Presumably, this implies some degree of integration, centralization, and force. (From Lyman Glenny's book, Autonomy of Public Colleges, p. 1). Control refers to the actual governance of institutional units within a state. State system refers to a state board responsible for higher education within a state (usually central and sole). Higher education refers to education beyond the grade twelve conducted or sponsored and controlled by an institutional unit. Adult or continuing education refers to a series of organized part-time learning experiences following termination of formal schooling normally not conducted within the usual daytime format and involving programs usually administered through an extension or continuing education unit or subunit. Higher adult education refers to adult education and continuing education conducted or sponsored and controlled by an institutional unit under the purview of a state system of coordination-control of higher education. Other definitions relating to specific aspects of these topics were included in the study but these should be sufficient for our purposes here today.

The purposes of this study were to provide baseline data concerning the efforts of states to coordinate-control higher adult education, identify the various models and patterns in operation or being developed, provide a means for making comparisons among state models utilizing a

series of categories, and thus made possible longitudinal studies of identifiable models for purposes of evaluating their effectiveness and efficiency at meeting state goals within certain constraints.

PROCEDURE

Baseline data was developed for the fifty states utilizing a questionnaire which requested information concerning higher adult education from the chief staff officer of each state system in these areas: presence of responsibility for the higher adult education function, staffing, status and nature of state studies of higher adult education, basis for development in this area, and the extent of program review. A request for documents was included with this initial questionnaire. From an analysis of the questionnaire and documents received from the fifty states, the role and to some degree the scope of state systems in the coordination-control of higher adult education was determined.

From the data developed, the models of coordination-control utilized or proposed by state systems and the categories of involvement by those systems was determined.

Twelve state systems were identified as having a high degree of involvement in the coordination-control of higher adult education and as having utilized or proposed one of the identified models.

The analysis of the documents received from twenty-six states produced a list of 119 items of system involvement in the area of

higher adult education. These were organized around eleven major areas and developed into a second questionnaire which was then sent to the twelve selected states. This ended the first phase of the study.

The collection and analysis of data developed from the second questionnaire formed the second phase of the study.

The eleven major areas under which the 119 identified items were subsumed and which formed the second questionnaire were: governance and administration, statewide planning, outcomes from statewide planning, allocation of functions, program review, resource allocation and utilization, evaluation, jurisdiction, provision of student services, nontraditional formats, and items of general nature not readily subsumed under the other areas.

The information developed from the two questionnaires and the documents received addressed the problem posed and satisfied the expected outcomes stated in terms of the purposes of this study.

FINDINGS

The following major findings, arranged according to the areas investigated, are presented.

1. State responsibility for higher adult education. Forty-two of the fifty state systems surveyed included the higher adult education function within its purview of responsibility. Five systems did not and three states had no state system. The five states indicated that they

are developing plans to include this function under their purview. All advisory coordinating agencies responded positively.

2. Staffing. Of the forty-two states, thirty assigned the responsibility to a staff member with eleven states assigning the function to a staff member full-time. The staff members in twenty-four state systems have the doctorate. The staff members assigned this function in twenty-six states have had education or previous experience in adult education. Over half have involved the staff member for more than three years.

3. State studies completed in the past. Of the thirty-nine states responding, twenty-two indicated they had completed state studies of higher adult education and of these, thirteen had implemented the recommendations emanating from those studies. Eight indicated plans to implement the recommendations.

4. Integral part of master plan. In twenty-three states, higher adult education is an integral part of the state master plan. Of these, thirteen are implementing the recommendations from the master plan.

5. Studies now in progress. Of forty-two states responding, twenty-nine indicated that studies are in progress. Five states had begun implementation of the results. Thirteen states were still studying the definition of higher adult education as it applies to their efforts.

Twenty-seven states indicated that they were at some stage in the conduct of studies on various of the eleven categories included on the questionnaire. 155 responses from these states indicated state studies were in progress with reference to the various categories. Studies were in progress on all categories and by twenty-six of the states responding.

6. Evolutionary development. Thirty-three states indicated that the coordination-control of higher adult education was the result of evolutionary development rather than state studies completed.

7. Program review. Seventy-five per cent of the states (twenty-eight) having responsibility for higher adult education have program review authority over programs (mostly credit courses) in higher adult education.

A content analysis was made of the documents to determine, if possible, the structure and nature of the systems represented and the areas of involvement by those systems.

Three basic models were identified. They were: the voluntary model (California and Iowa), the central unit plus regional organizations model (Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Oregon, and Virginia with the following states having proposed this model--Illinois Massachusetts, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas), and the central unit at the state level model (Hawaii, Kansas, Tennessee, Wisconsin with the following states having proposed this model--

Louisiana and Rhode Island). These models vary primarily on the degree of centralized authority exercised and retained by the state system central office. All of the models have advisory structures of some type but in the central unit at state level model that advisory structure does specifically that-advise. It has no decision-making authority as in the second model. Regional organizations in the second model are delegated certain responsibilities and powers, which usually involve resolving jurisdictional disputes and the determination of function within the region. In some cases limited program review is delegated to the regional organization. Regional planning may be an important responsibility of this element.

In addition to identifying these models, 119 items of involvement by state systems with reference to higher adult education were identified and organized under the eleven major areas referred to below.

Following are the major findings based on responses to the items of involvement by the twelve state systems listed according to major areas.

1. Administration and goverance. Six states (Florida, Colorado, Oregon, Kansas, Virginia, and Michigan) indicated by positive responses to a major portion of the questions relating to this area their active and well-developed involvement. These states represented the more centralized models of coordination-

control of higher adult education. All had regulatory powers with regard to this function.

2. Statewide planning. A majority of the states surveyed had conducted statewide planning as defined by the number of positive responses to items included in this area. Although the planning process is operational and comprehensive in at least five states (Kansas, Florida, Illinois, Colorado, and Oregon) with others being marginal; the individual planning elements necessary for statewide planning are well represented. Those elements utilized the least are those pertaining to institutional internal affairs and planning in the area of finance.

3. Outcomes from statewide planning. The systems generally indicated more involvement in utilizing the outcomes of statewide planning than in the process of statewide planning.

4. Allocation of functions. A majority of the states allocated functions to institutions reflecting their strengths and capabilities, and with the result of avoiding unnecessary and costly duplication of programs and services.

5. Program review. The states were evenly divided with regard to authority over program review. States with regulatory powers indicated authority over program review.

6. Resource allocation and utilization. Less states are actively involved in this area than in the other areas included in this survey. The states have not grappled with the tough questions: What is "maximum efficiency"? What criteria should determine "effectiveness"? What guidelines should be established for the utilization of resources? All but three states actively seek an adequate funding level for higher adult education to provide the necessary resources needed to meet state goals. One of these states has formally recommended that adequate funds be provided. Most systems (nine) indicated they determine the funding support for the operating outlays of each institution.

7. Evaluation. About half of the states indicated they are active in an evaluation process with reference to higher adult education offerings.

8. Jurisdiction. All but one system supports the development of consortiums of institutions for a region or statewide and all but two assign jurisdiction over programming based on the nature and mission of the institution. Four states delegate decision-making to regional councils over regional matters.

9. Provision of student services. No states provided financial aid to adult part-time students on an equal basis with full-time, on-campus students and

only three have formally recommended such action. Otherwise, the states are either active in this area or are formally recommending the provision of student services for adults.

10. Nontraditional formats. There was little indication of active involvement in this area with the exception of the involvement in the area of the "credit by examination" degree option.

11. General. All states indicated that their systems have as a major goal, the equality of educational opportunity for all citizens of their states.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the data developed in this study, the following conclusions appear warranted.

1. State systems are assuming an active role in the coordination-control of the higher adult education function.

2. It is not possible to predict whether a state system has responsibility over the higher adult education function on the basis of the type of state system operable within a particular state.

3. Among those states indicating a responsibility for higher adult education, the extent and nature of that responsibility varies.

4. States tend to view responsibility in terms of control and the presence of legal-formal structures for coordination and control.

5. The type of state system is not predictive of the level of education of staff members, although it is more likely that a staff member will be assigned this function full-time in a system with regulatory powers.

6. With the distribution of length of time in which staff were first assigned responsibility in higher adult education, it appears that this development has been gradual and will continue to be so.

7. While roughly half of the states indicating responsibility for this function have made or are in the process of conducting state studies of higher adult education, few are actually in the process of implementing recommendations made on the basis of those studies.

8. Those states in the process of conducting state studies are including the elements in their studies recognized as necessary (as judged according to the literature on state system planning).

9. Of the states indicating a responsibility for higher adult education, most have program review authority although primarily with reference to credit courses.

10. Most of the states having an identifiable model of coordination control of higher adult education utilize a central office advised by a council formed from institutional representatives active in continuing education and extension.

11. States utilizing the central unit plus regional organizations tend to delegate to regional councils authority over determination of

functions within a region, limited program review, regional planning, and the resolving of regional jurisdictional disputes.

12. States become more involved in the coordination-control of higher adult education as they are given more authority in the area based on a statutory or constitutional mandate.

13. The planning elements least included in state studies appear to be those related to the internal affairs of institutions and the area of finance.

14. States still have not grappled with the tough questions related to resource allocation and utilization and the development of criteria to determine accountability in the utilization of resources.

15. The terms "efficiency" and "effectiveness" are widely used in the literature, but are still lacking the definitiveness in practice to allow explication of their dimensions.

16. Although most states selected on the basis of their involvement in the area of higher adult education and having or proposed an identifiable model of coordination-control actively seek an adequate funding level for higher adult education to provide the necessary resources needed to meet state goals, none provide financial aid to adult part-time students on an equal basis with full-time, on-campus students.

I have a list of recommendations resulting from the study but I will not present them. They are on sale in the lobby.
Thanks again for the invitation to St. Louis. Visit us in Oklahoma.